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*Ireland under the Normans, 1216-1333.* By GODDARD HENRY ORPEN, Member of the Royal Irish Academy. Volumes III. and IV. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1920. Pp. 314; 343. 30s.)

THESE two volumes, which complete the survey of the Anglo-Norman age of Irish history begun by Mr. Orpen ten years ago,<sup>1</sup> show the same qualities that distinguished their predecessors: careful research, critical judgment, and an honest endeavor for historical truth. In a larger measure they are pioneer work, pieced together from isolated annalistic entries and from public records, without the aid of any such central body of chronicle as exists for contemporary England. Skeptical of well-known writers like Roger of Wendover (III. 66-72) and John Barbour (IV. 165 ff.), the author prefers to rely on documentary evidence, and he has utilized minutely the surviving rolls and calendars and inquisitions, unconscious records "not designed to influence posterity, but intended for immediate use in the ordinary course of administration or business".

A narrative built up in this way must suffer from lack of continuity, particularly in a period when Irish history is chiefly concerned with the doings of local families, with little in the way of common organization to give it unity or direction. It inheres in the subject that much of the space must be given to the partition of Leinster among the daughters of William Marshal, the deeds of the Fitzgeralds in Munster, the conquest of Connaught and the rivalries to which it gave rise, the more isolated story of the earldom of Ulster, and the deeds of native kings like Brian O'Neill and Aedh O'Connor, "the destroyer and improver of all Erin during the period of his own renown, dignity, and time".

In all this interplay of tribal chieftainship and Norman feudalism Mr. Orpen is not blind to the institutional side. "Whatever disadvantages were inherent in the devolution of a Celtic chieftainship—and from the point of view of social order and progress they were many and grave—the system was at least free from these evils of feudal succession", the division of a great fief "among female heirs whose husbands were absentees with greater interests elsewhere", and the long periods of administration by bailiffs of the crown who had no permanent interest in the welfare of the holding. So again the problem of Connaught was complicated by the fact that the first feoffees were already great feudal lords elsewhere.

As regards general policy, it appears that the weaknesses of Henry III., always "something of a spoilt child", counted for little in Ireland, unless it be his "political ineptitude" in dealing with the reserved cantreds of Connaught. The barons remained loyal, their local independence little restrained by the royal justiciars, and there was no barons' war here. By failing to visit Ireland in the course of his long reign, Henry

<sup>1</sup> See this *Review*, XVII. 361 ff.

set an example generally followed by his successors, though Edward III. went so far as to plan a visit in 1332. Edward I., both as prince and as king, was an absentee, and his high talents as a ruler had small effect in Ireland; yet his reign "was in fact the culminating period of the whole Anglo-Norman epoch", and the long decline began with the invasion of Edward Bruce in 1315. It was characteristic of Edward I. that he should seek to introduce English law into Ireland as into Wales, "because the laws which the Irish use are detestable to God, and so contrary to all law that they ought not to be deemed laws". The impracticability of such a measure is clearly recognized by Mr. Orpen, who points out that by the fourteenth century the question became rather how to prevent the resident English from adopting Irish law. In law, as in everything else, Ireland was but half conquered. The first parliament was held in 1297; that of 1310 passed many ordinances which, as an annalist remarks, "would have been very useful had they been observed".

Most readers will find the chief interest in the concluding chapter, where the author enlarges the survey of One Hundred and Sixty Years of Norman Rule which he began in the second volume and continued in an article in this *Review* (XIX. 245-256). It is illuminating to bring the Norman conquest of Ireland into the same perspective as the conquest of England and Sicily. While declaring that Henry II. "had a better title to Ireland than his great-grandfather had to England", Mr. Orpen has no illusions as to the "veneer of legality" which covered Norman self-seeking. Keeping strictly to the Middle Ages, he distinguishes sharply the indirect and remote consequences of Anglo-Norman domination from the more direct and immediate results, which he finds distinctly beneficent as contrasted with the "two centuries of retrogression, stagnation, and comparative anarchy" which followed. In particular the material progress of the country is shown by fresh evidence; even in a matter like coinage the absence of earlier Irish mints assured an advance over the earlier period which Professor Oman has denied to the Norman conquest of England. On the inherent weaknesses of the English occupation the author is less informing. The chief of these, as he sees it, was the persistence of Celtic tribalism alongside a decaying feudalism. But that is another story, which needs to be worked out for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in a continuation which Mr. Orpen is best qualified to write. Such a work will supply useful material for comparative study of the results of Norman conquest in general, as well as the indispensable background for Tudor policy in Ireland.

CHARLES H. HASKINS.

*Weltgeschichte in gemeinverständlicher Darstellung.* In Verbindung mit . . . herausgegeben von LUDO MORITZ HARTMANN. Band V. *Das Späte Mittelalter.* Von KURT KASER. (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes A.-G. 1921. Pp. vi, 278. M. 24.)

THIS is the fifth volume of the Hartmann *Weltgeschichte*, twice be-